



Are the Days Getting Longer?

by John A. Stey

As the holidays wind down and we pass the winter solstice, there's still more darkness than sunlight and making plans to travel in New England is not exactly Spring tonic. But Nancy Putnam enthusiastically continues to book outreach activities in the region. The NER office has received outreach proposals from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and the UMass Medical Center. These projects will be reviewed and sent to NLM for consideration in the Year 04 Budget. Be thinking about outreach projects due on April 15th. An updated RFP can be found on the NER homepage or call Nancy Putnam for more details. The announcement requesting proposals will be mailed in early February. Outreach projects can increase your library's visibility and help to broaden the base of support for your institution. Ultimately your time, effort, expertise and resources help to improve the public health.

During December and January, NLM will be renovating several public areas to accommodate cabling for improved access to electronic resources while moving ahead with the installation of the Endeavor Integrated Library System. The web-based DOCLINE®/DOCUSER® interface remains on schedule for release in late summer with some testing beginning in the spring. We are still very interested in your feedback related to Online SERHOLD® reporting. Without actually seeing the new interface, we can appreciate that it may be difficult to make a decision to update your own records. Your comfort level with technology and the cost savings are just two variables that will guide your decision. Others to consider include: staff time, the dynamic nature of your collection, and the need for creating local SERHOLD products. The NER staff will pass along any new information from NLM as it becomes available.



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The target for implementing EFTS2 is January. SCAMeL, in the southwest region, and California will be testing the EFTS2 system during January and February. A goal of the EFTS was to minimize the costs associated with creating invoices/bills and cutting checks. The new system will include a service fee structure that will help recover costs associated with institutions that do not maintain sufficient funds to cover their monthly debits. The Monthly Statements will be more information rich and will enable participants to better manage their accounts. Look for the new Monthly Statements and a EFTS Policy and Procedure Memorandum after the January run.

Yes, the days are getting longer, but not fast enough! Send us your Spring Tonic.

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National Guideline Clearinghouse Web Site Goes Live

The National Guideline Clearinghouse (NGC), an exciting new free Web-based library resource for up-to-date evidence-based clinical practice guidelines, went live on the Internet on December 15, 1998 at <http://www.guideline.gov>. Developed by the Agency for Health Care Policy and Research (AHCPR), in partnership with the American Medical Association and the American Association of Health Plans, the NGC is designed to promote quality health care by making available the latest clinical practice guidelines that are based on scientific evidence, all in one easy-to-access location.

Development of clinical practice guidelines has grown rapidly over the last five years. This growth reflects increased interest in improving the quality of clinical practice, reducing uncertainty and variability in health care decision making, and stemming rapidly increasing health care costs. However, many health care practitioners, health care systems, and health care purchasers have difficulty gaining access to and keeping abreast of the many clinical practice guidelines currently in use. Moreover, existing clinical practice guidelines often differ in development methodology and content, further complicating their use.

Until the NGC, there has been no resource that provides free and comprehensive access to objective detailed information on clinical practice guidelines. The goals of NGC are (1) to provide health professionals, health care providers, health plans, integrated delivery systems, quality assurance programs, and others an accessible mechanism for obtaining objective, detailed information on clinical practice guidelines and (2) to enhance health care quality by advancing the dissemination, implementation and use of clinical practice guidelines based on scientific evidence.

In addition to its 24-hour access on the Internet, the utility of the NGC is underscored by its useful features:

- Standardized abstracts containing information about each guideline and how it was developed.
- A comparison of guidelines covering similar topic areas, listing major interventions addressed, recommendations made, and areas of agreement and disagreement.
- The full text of guidelines (when available) or links to full text (when not).
- Topic-related electronic mail groups where registered users can exchange information about aspects of guideline development, content, and implementation.

NGC is expected to have a broad professional audience. Health care systems



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(e.g., health plans, integrated delivery systems, hospital systems, etc.) are anticipated to be an important audience for NGC. These organizations will be able to use the information contained in NGC to adopt or adapt nationally available guidelines into their systems. In addition, individual health care practitioners and medical specialty and professional societies are expected to make use of NGC. Because individual practitioners must sort through clinical practice guidelines from several different sources covering similar or same conditions, they will benefit from being able to obtain objective information on the similarities and differences between documents. Medical specialty and professional societies will find access to NGC useful in their own guideline development efforts. Clinicians may find NGC useful in their discussions of clinical options for their patients.

State and local governments in their role as health care providers and purchasers also require similar information as part of their quality assurance and oversight responsibilities. As these entities restructure their health care systems and move from purchasing and providing health care services under traditional fee-for-service plans to managed care systems, they face significant challenges in how they assure quality services through their contracting, regulatory, and oversight roles.

Employee benefits managers utilize information contained within clinical practice guidelines and similar documents to make more well-informed purchasing decisions when negotiating with health plans for employee health care coverage. Medical and nursing educational institutions also have specific need for information contained within clinical practice guidelines and related products for incorporation into academic curricula and continuing medical and nursing education programs.

The design of the NGC has incorporated previous research funded by the Department of Health and Human Services. The classification system for NGC is derived, in part, from the National Library of Medicine's (NLM) Unified Medical Language System (UMLS). Bi-directional links will exist between NLM's PubMed and Health Services/Technology Assessment Text (HSTAT). The form of the structured abstract of clinical practice guidelines in NGC was based on research funded collaboratively between AHCPR and NLM. The definition of what constitutes a clinical practice guideline was taken from work completed by the Institute of Medicine under the sponsorship of AHCPR.

The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research is the lead agency charged with supporting research designed to improve the quality of health care, reduce its cost, and broaden access to essential services. AHCPR's broad programs of research bring practical, science-based information to medical practitioners and to consumers and other health care purchasers. The National Guideline Clearinghouse is an example of a program to make science-based clinical practice guidelines available to AHCPR's constituent audiences.

Grants Gallery

by Linda Milgrom, NN/LM PNR

The National Library of Medicine recently announced they would consider applications for projects with a focus on patient education or consumer health. For many years Resource Grants have been offered by NLM "as a means of fostering the use of computer and telecommunications technologies to coordinate and disseminate health information." However, funded projects generally dealt with library networks and connectivity targeting health professionals. Complementing NLM's initiatives in consumer health such as MEDLINEplus, the grant programs will now also cover consumer health and/or patient education projects.

NLM provides extensive information about its funding opportunities on the website at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/ep/extramural.html>. Application deadlines are February 1, June 1, and October 1 each year. RML staff are happy to discuss ideas or review drafts. Linda Milgrom and Frances Johnson recently updated their workshop "NLM Grants Demystified." Slides from that class are available at <ftp://ftp.nlm.washington.edu/pub/grantsfinal.ppt>.

This is the ideal time to apply, before NLM is flooded with patient and consumer-oriented proposals!

Benefits of Getting Connected to the Internet

We're about to change our calendars to 1999 and by now everyone should have come to the conclusion that the Internet is here to stay and is playing an ever increasing role in information access. Recognizing it's importance, the NN/LM NER office has worked with several underconnected institutions in getting them computers and connected to the Internet. If you're aware of any libraries that are still struggling with this, please have them contact the office. However, there may be other barriers to getting your library connected. If you're putting together a case on the benefits of Internet access to take to your IT Dept. or CIO, or would like to stay informed on some of the issues, the following bibliography may be helpful. It addresses several benefits, including Clinical, Library, Organizational and Security issues. If you are unable to get a copy of the article, you may contact the office at 860-679-4500 or within New England 800-338-7657 and have a copy faxed to you.

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Library Applications

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<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/pubs/techbull/tb.html>

Table of Contents for the Sep-Oct 1998 Issue

Technical Notes

- Reminder: CANCERLIT® and PDQ® To Be Removed from the NLM Databases - Available from NCI's Web Site
- Subscribe to New Files Mailing List
- 1999 MeSH® Tools - Ordering and Pricing Information
- MeSH® in USMARC Format Available To Download
- Pre-explosion tables for 1999
- Revised NLM Pricing Information
- OLDMEDLINE Expands Years of Coverage

Year-End Processing MEDLINE® and MEDLINE Backfile ELHILL Configuration - 1999

During 1998 Year-End Processing, all citations published in 1995 or earlier will be pulled from MEDLINE and placed in the appropriate ELHILL Backfiles.

Year-End Processing of Stored Searches, Changes to Automatic SDIs and Saved Searches - ELHILL MEDLARS System

Each year in the fall, changes are made to records in MEDLINE, its Backfiles, and other MEDLARS databases. This work, called "Year-End Processing," includes annual changes to Medical Sub-

ject Headings (MeSH). While the work goes largely unnoticed as it proceeds, there are important dates for searchers that are associated with this Year-End Processing. Particularly CRITICAL this year is the discontinuation of Automatic SDI current awareness searches for all files except SDILINE.

Farewell to Gratefully Yours

Beginning in January 1999, several popular features of Gratefully Yours, a bi-monthly publication originally intended for Gratefully Med users, will be published electronically in other NLM publications. The November-December 1998 issue of Gratefully Yours will be the last issue to be printed on paper and mailed to readers.

The Year 2000 Solution for ELHILL® and the MEDLARS® Databases

[Editor's Note: This article is a technical presentation of the implementation of Year 2000 compliancy for NLM's ELHILL databases. Please see the Year-End Processing article in the September-October 1997 NLM Technical Bulletin for search hints.]

MeSH Coming Attractions

There were 313 descriptors added to the 1999 MeSH including 38 Publication Types. Five descriptors were deleted. A list of new Publication Types appears at the end of this article with their scope notes.

AVLINE® and CATLINE® Data To Be Removed from Other NLM Databases

1999 MeSH on the Web

The 1999 MeSH files are available for download from the MeSH Web site at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh>.

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Security

- 21.* The 1998 Guide to HealthData Security: a practical reference to technologies, policies, standards and trends: Faulkner and Gray: 320 pages.
- 22.* Ankney R. Data Security Technologies. In: The 1998 Guide to Health Data Security: a practical reference to technologies, policies, standards and trends; Faulkner and Gray: 41-52.
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27. Morrissey J. Securing the Internet frontier. Mod Healthc. 1996 Oct 21;26(43):56-8, 60-1, 64.

If you are unable to obtain copies of articles listed in this bibliography, all unmarked articles are available from your RML by fax.

* Items 19, 21, 23, and 26 are NOT available from your RML by fax.

Public Health Training Subcommittee Seeks Help

The Public Health Training Subcommittee of the Joint CDC/NLM Public Health Initiative is seeking your assistance in identifying both existing and planned training activities targetted toward health sciences librarians and/or public health professionals for the purpose of building on and expanding training in the area of public health resources. (Please see <http://www.nnlm.nlm.nih.gov/partners/> for additional information.)

If your institution is currently engaged in or planning on providing training in public health resources, we are requesting information addressing the following areas:

- description of the different kinds of training (to be provided;
- delivery methods for the training (one-on-one, classroom demonstration, Website or other electronic medium, etc.);
- description of the target audience (librarians, public health professionals, public health students, etc.).

We would also respectfully request sharing of resources, if you are willing and interested in providing copies of training materials to the committee.

Information may be sent to Nancy Allee by email (nallee@umich.edu), by mail (University of Michigan, 109 Observatory, M2030 SPH2, Ann Arbor, MI 48109-2029) or by fax (734-763-9851).

Please respond by February 19, 1999 and include your name, name of your institution, postal address, email address, Website, and telephone number.

Table Top Display for Loan



The NN/LM NER office has a table top display and literature describing NLM programs and services to network members and/or healthcare organizations or associations. This is available for exhibiting or demonstrations within the region. If you would like to borrow this display, please contact the office.

PubMed Has a New FAQ

by Nancy Putnam, Outreach Coordinator

PubMed has a new FAQ section located as a choice in the gray left hand column of the screen. The FAQ answers many of the common questions such as how to print or save the citations, where to retrieve the full text, and how to limit a search to a particular date range. It is a good place to check out the next time a patron comes in with a quick question about PubMed that you are not sure how to answer.

A Year in New England

by Nancy Putnam, Outreach Coordinator



As my first anniversary as Outreach Coordinator rolls around I thought I would take a look at what has been accomplished during the year. Due to the announcement of free MEDLINE on the web and the eventual demise of the Elhill system, the largest demand, at the beginning, was certainly PubMed training. The need for quality PubMed training, especially within the health sciences libraries, was increasing geometrically. Putting this as a priority, I was able to provide training for over 400 librarians in the region this past year. However the demand did not stop at librarians, as I conducted numerous training sessions for health care professionals, various specialties, medical librarians of the future at library schools, and many community based organizations at their facilities and at their annual conferences.

The NN/LM was also present at many national and regional health care association conferences, exposing NLM products to the health care professionals. Additionally, I had the opportunity to work with the outreach subcontractors and follow their progress through quarterly reports.

I look forward to continuing all of the above services as well as expanding efforts to include several group specific projects. I had the great opportunity to meet many of you in person at training sessions or professional meetings and would like to thank everyone for making my first year as Outreach Coordinator a memorable and enjoyable one. I look forward to continued communication and collaboration. As always the NN/LM is here to help you with any of your NLM needs.

Y2K

Father Time has continued his steady march onward and we are about to find ourselves one step closer to



that ominous date of January 1, 2000. As 1999 arrives, we're down to one more tick as the date roles over to herald the new millenium. There

are plenty of "Chicken Little's" out there predicting doom and gloom and others who say it's not so bad. Only time will truly tell us how this will play out, but it's probably a good idea to at least know a little something about the Year 2000 problem.

Your own institution probably has already implemented it's own Y2K policy. Measures are being taken care of by your IT Dept, so I wouldn't panic, but you may want to educate yourself a bit on all the talk. As far as things that are important to you

as Network Members, the Electronic Fund Transfer System will be Y2K compliant and QuickDOC is now ready as well. (*See below*)

The National Library of Medicine is working to make all systems, including the new DOCLINE, PubMed, and Internet Grateful Med, Y2K compliant. According to Kent A. Smith, Deputy Director, NLM and

Project Director, NLM System Reinvention, "The bottom line is that NLM must move to a more modern system architecture if it is to maintain and enhance its information services. The schedule for the transition is being geared to the reality of what can be accomplished within a given time frame and is influenced in part by various Federal mandates, including deadlines for Year 2000 compliance and for consolidating government mainframe computer installations." NLM will also be posting Y2K compliance information on their Web site (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov>).

How to Test Your PC for the Year 2000 Problem

by Judy Consales, NN/LM PSR

NSTL provides a free program to test your personal computer for the Year 2000 problem at http://www.nstl.com/html/ymark2000_faq.html. This web page also includes a nice frequently-asked-questions list about the Year 2000 problem.

Other selected Y2K Web resources:

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers on the Year 2000 Challenge at

<http://www.s390.ibm.com/stories/faq2000.html>

PC Magazine Year 2000 Resource Center at

<http://www.zdnet.com/pcmag/special/y2k/index.html>

Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center - Year 2000 Resources at

<http://www.ttuhsc.edu/pages/year2000/Ttuy2k.htm>

U.S. Federal Government Gateway for Year 2000 - Information Directories at

<http://www.itpolicy.gsa.gov/mks/yr2000/y2khome.htm>

Year 2000 Home Page at

<http://www.ibm.com/IBM/year2000>

QuickDOC

Version 2.29i of QuickDOC has been released (11/98) and is available via anonymous ftp. Version 2.29i is the first Year-2000-compliant version of QuickDOC. It also includes expanded information on Departments, including 16-digit full department identification, mailing addresses, etc.

DOCLINE - New Hours

Effective January 4, 1999, the DOCLINE system will be available from 6:00 A.M. - 11:00 P.M., Monday-Friday, and 6:00 A.M. - 9:00 P.M., Saturday (Eastern time).

CANADIAN HEALTH LIBRARIES ASSOCIATION/ASSOCIATION DES BIBLIOTHEQUES DE LA SANTE DU CANADA 1999 CONFERENCE - Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada - May 25-29, 1999

This year's theme, "A Bridge to the New Millennium", has inspired a wide-ranging, and very topical programme. Speakers will address such topics as the future of information systems, the Cochrane Collaboration, health information networks, consumer health information and new roles for librarians in the 21st century. The "Continuing Education" portion of the programme offers sessions on Lobbying, Systematic Reviews, How to Design an Effective Web Page, Evaluation of Consumer Health Information Resources, and QuickDOC: Working with the Web Version of DOCLINE. For more details on the programme, how to register and other information about the Conference, please visit the website at: <http://www.library.dal.ca/chla-absc99/>

Calendar of Events

March 18, 1999

NAHSL Spring CE
File Formats and Plug-ins
9 am-1 pm
Middletown, CT

March 23, 1999

NAHSL Spring CE
File Formats and Plug-ins
Lewiston/Auburn College 9 am-1 pm
Lewiston, ME

March 24, 1999

NAHSL Spring CE
File Formats and Plug-ins
Dartmouth College 9 am-1 pm
Hanover, NH

March 25-28, 1999

The NER staff will be exhibiting at the National Science Teachers Association Conference
Boston, MA

March 30, 1999

NAHSL Spring CE
File Formats and Plug-ins
Brown University 12:30pm-4:30 pm
Providence, RI

March 31, 1999

NAHSL Spring CE
File Formats and Plug-ins
Tufts University Health Sciences Library 9 am-1 pm
Boston, MA

"Plug-Ins Plus: Internet Add-ons, Plug-ins, and File Formats"

Do you think a plug-in is necessary to make your lamp work? If someone asks about a file format, do you think letter or legal? Is Shockwave something only Los Angeles should worry about? The NAHSL Spring CE offering will enlighten you as to what these terms mean on the Internet. Come learn about software to extend your browsers capabilities so you can watch video, listen to audio and look at Portable Document Format (PDF) files. In addition, learn about different types of files, how to transfer files to another machine and about file compression. Register today for this hands on class so you can say "Acrobat isn't found only at the circus."

These half-day hands-on workshops are sponsored by the North Atlantic Health Sciences Librarians (NAHSL), MLA, and the National Network/Libraries of Medicine New England Region (NN/LM NER). They will be offered in 5 locations around New England.

MLA CE Credit is pending.

The cost:
\$25 for NAHSL members (must be paid up in 1999)
\$30 all others

Please register early to avoid disappointment; registration is limited to approximately 20 people at each site. For more information please contact karen.odato@dartmouth.edu.

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